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ABSTRACT

A review of the second year of the partial immersion program at Key Elementary School (Arlington, Virginia), where half the day is taught in English and half in Spanish, is reported. The review includes classroom observations, student and teacher interviews, student assessment, and parent and staff interviews. Reasons for the program's success are identified as the following: teacher/staff dedication; coordination between the two immersion classes and between the English and Spanish parts of the day; the opportunity for teachers to participate in inservice training along with summer curriculum development; and the active involvement of parents. Five major recommendations are offered: (1) continue the program and expand it to include grades 1-3; (2) establish a magnet program for partial immersion (English-Spanish) classes to attract a wide variety of students; (3) continue summer inservice and curriculum development activities; (4) continue the coordination among staff; and (5) continue to acquire Spanish language materials for classroom and library use. (Author/LB)

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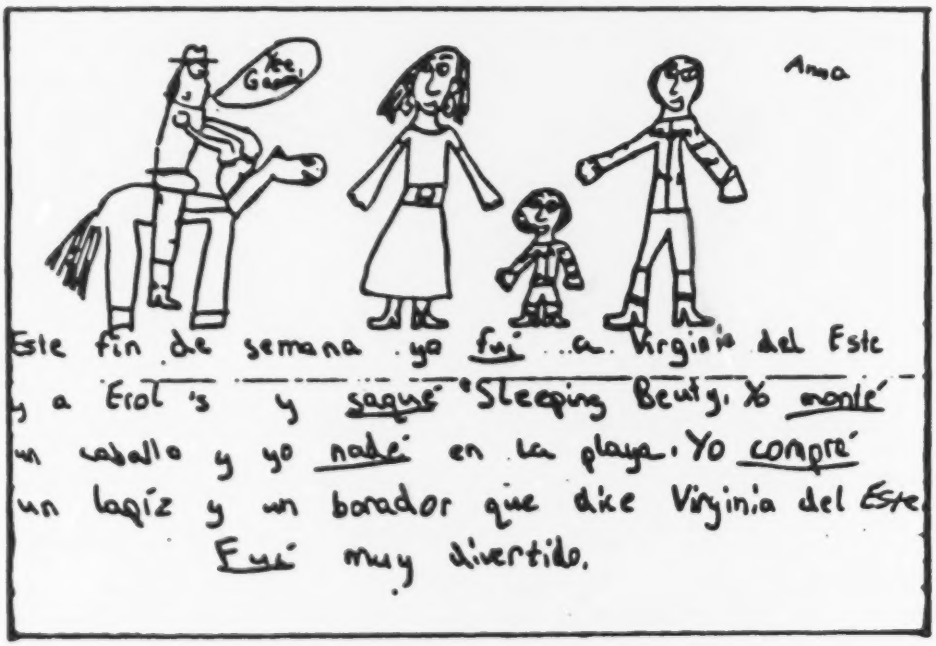
Ama
Este fin de semana yo fui a Virginia del Este
y a Ecol's y saqué "Sleeping Beuty. Yo monté
un caballo y yo nadé en la playa. Yo compré
un lapíz y un borador que dice Virginia del Este
Fuí muy divertido.

Center for Applied Linguistics
Center for Language Education and Research
August 1988

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CAL

Review of the Second Year of the Partial Immersion Program at
Key Elementary School, Arlington, Virginia
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ABSTRACT

The partial immersion program at Key School, where half the day is taught in English and half in Spanish, has just completed its second year. The review of the program, which included classroom observations, student and teacher interviews, student assessment, and parent and staff interviews, revealed a highly successful educational program for first and second graders.

Some of the reasons the program has been successful are: 1) the dedication of the teachers and staff, 2) the coordination between the two immersion classes and between the English and Spanish parts of the day, 3) the opportunity for teachers to participate in in-service training along with curriculum development for the past two summers, and 4) the active involvement of parents in the program.

We have five major recommendations:

1. The program should be continued and expanded to involve grades 1-3.
2. A magnet program should be established at Key for partial immersion (English-Spanish) classes to attract a wide variety of students from all over Arlington.
3. Summer in-service and curriculum development for new and current teachers should be continued.
4. The excellent coordination among staff dealing with students in the program should continue.
5. Spanish language materials for classroom use and the library should continue to be acquired.

After two years of development, the partial immersion model has proven to be a very effective model for Key School for educating minority and majority language students. The Spanish speaking children benefit because they get the opportunity to maintain their native language while learning English and the English speakers benefit because they get the opportunity to become fluent in Spanish.

CAL

I. Introduction

A. Program Design

The Key School Partial Immersion Program is designed so that "second language learning is done in a way similar to how children acquire their first language -- they learn it in order to take part in meaningful and interesting communication" (from a report on the program prepared by Katharine Panfil, former Foreign Language Supervisor for Arlington Public Schools). Half of each day is conducted in English and half in Spanish, providing an "immersion" experience for the non-native speakers of the language. Further, since the class includes native speakers of both languages, the students can turn to their fellow students as resources.

The program has now been in operation for two years. During the first year, one first grade class was involved. In the second year, that class (now second graders) continued and a new first grade class was added. For the 1987-88 school year, the two classes were paired programmatically. One teacher, Floe Bingham, taught the English portion of the day for both classes. Specifically, she taught the second graders English language arts and math in the morning and worked with the first graders on English language arts and math in the afternoon. Evelyn Fernandez was responsible for the social studies, science, and Spanish language arts portion of the curriculum for the first graders (taught in the morning) and Marta Guzman for the second graders (taught in the afternoon).

The county curriculum was used for all content areas so that students in this program worked toward the same objectives as other first and second graders. The schedule was as follows:

	First grade	Second grade
Morning	Spanish-Ms.Fernandez Social Studies Science Spanish Language Arts	English-Ms. Bingham English Language Arts Math
Afternoon	English-Ms. Bingham English Language Arts Math	Spanish-Ms. Guzman Social Studies Science Spanish Language Arts

The two classrooms were located adjacent to each other, an arrangement which facilitated the movement of students from one teacher's room to another at mid-day as well as a variety of shared activities. Special classes such as music, art, physical education, and library occurred as scheduled in the regular first and second grade curriculum and were taught in English.

B. Personnel

As mentioned above, Floe Bingham taught the English portion of the day for both the first and second grade immersion classes. Marta Guzman taught the second grade Spanish portion of the day and Evelyn Fernandez taught the first grade Spanish portion of the day. They are both native speakers of Spanish. Dr. Paul Wireman, Principal, Jan Spees, Reading Specialist, and Marta Guzman in her role as ESOL/HILT Resource Specialist at Key gave ongoing support to the teachers and students in the program. Also, the Arlington County Foreign Language Supervisor, Katharine Panfil, assisted at the county level through support for staff and curriculum development.

C. Class Composition

The second grade immersion class had 18 students. Of these, 7 were native Spanish speakers and 11 were native English speakers or had another native language but had been mainstreamed into an English-medium class. Fifteen of the

students had been in the immersion class last year while three were new to the program this year.

The first grade class had 19 students: 9 native Spanish speakers and 10 native English or other language speakers. The paired first grade class (taught in English) that was used for comparative purposes had 17 students: 6 native Spanish speakers, 6 native English speakers, and 5 speakers of other languages.

II. Evaluation Procedures

Arlington staff requested that CAL/CLEAR provide an evaluation of the immersion program's second year of operation. CLEAR staff who participated in the project included Donna Christian, JoAnn Crandall, Nancy Rhodes, and G. Richard Tucker. The evaluation was planned as a follow-up to the first year's evaluation and addressed the same questions:

1. What is the English and Spanish proficiency of students in the immersion program, and how does it change over the year?

2. How well do the immersion students do in content area subjects? Do they make academic progress comparable to other first and second graders?

3. Are cross-cultural and language attitudes enhanced by participation in the program?

4. How do parents view the program?

5. How might the program be improved?

Several types of information collection activities were undertaken for this review of the program. From January throught April, CLEAR staff conducted classroom observations of the immersion class. Staff members spent time observing both the English and Spanish instruction of the first and second grades. There were many opportunities for CLEAR staff to visit classes at other times before and after the observation period and to talk informally with the immersion teachers and other Key staff. They also attended parent meetings and

student performances for parents which allowed informal interaction with parents as well.

As with the first year, several kinds of test data were collected on the students to assess their academic progress and language development. The Language Assessment Scales (LAS) were administered in the fall and spring to the first and second grades in the program to provide a measure of both English and Spanish proficiency for the immersion students. For the first time this year, the Student Oral Proficiency Rating (SOPR) was used by the teachers to assess Spanish speaking proficiency for both the first and second graders. The Boehm R Test of Basic Concepts was administered to the first graders again this year to assess the students' conceptual development in English and Spanish. Finally, the students' mastery of content area subjects was examined from scores on end-of-unit tests in social studies, science, mathematics, and reading.

Like last year, we conducted a series of interviews with the students to find out about their feelings on learning in Spanish and in English. Teachers in the program were also interviewed as well as the principal. Finally, some of the parents of immersion students were asked to describe their feelings about the program. They were interviewed by phone (or in person if they happened to be visiting the school on one of the days of our observations).

The results of these information collection efforts are described in the following sections.

III. Student Progress and Satisfaction

A. English and Spanish Language Development

The Language Assessment Scales (LAS) are used to measure English and Spanish language development through a five-part test that measures students' ability with minimal pairs (identifying words as being the same or different),

vocabulary (naming an object represented by a drawing), pronunciation (repeating a word), comprehension (listening to a tape and then pointing to a picture that is described on the tape), and oral production (retelling a story). The first four parts of the test make up 50% of the total score while the story retelling makes up the other 50%. Students are rated on a scale from 0 - 5 with 0 indicating a "non-speaker" and 5 indicating a "fluent" (proficient) speaker.

FIRST GRADE English Speakers. On the LAS English test in the fall, of the 9 native English speakers, five were at level 4 and four were at level 5. By spring, they were all at level 5. One English speaker arrived after the fall testing and scored at level 5 in the spring.

On the Spanish test in the fall, all nine non-native Spanish speakers scored at level 1. By spring, three had moved up to a level 2, three had moved up to a level 3, and surprisingly, one student had moved up to a level 4. (The late arrival scored at level 1 in the spring.) Compared to the first grade class last year, this class has shown a more noticeable improvement in Spanish oral skills. In last year's class, only four students out of twelve had moved up to a level 2 by the end of the year.

FIRST GRADE Spanish Speakers. On the English test in the fall, among the four native Spanish speakers, two students were at level 3 and two at level 5. By the spring test, one student was at level 4 and the other three at level 5. (Five Spanish speakers joined the class after the fall LAS administration, so they have only spring scores; four were at level 5 and one at level 4.)

In the fall on the Spanish test, one student was at level 2, two were at level 4, and one was at level 5. By spring, one was at level 4 and the other three were at level 5. (The late arrivals were all at level 5 in the spring.)

SECOND GRADE English Speakers. On the LAS English test, of the 11 native English speakers or native speakers of languages other than English or Spanish, all scored at level 5 in fall and the spring.

On the Spanish test in the fall, this same group had two scoring at level 1, three at level 2, and six at level 3. By spring, one student scored at level 2, four at level 3, five at level 4, and one at level 5.

SECOND GRADE Spanish Speakers. On the English test in the fall and spring, among the six native Spanish speakers, one was at level 4 and five were at level 5. (One student is excluded because he missed the spring testing.)

On the Spanish test, the seven students tested all scored at level 5 in the fall while one student in the spring scored a high level 4.

Four conclusions can be drawn from the LAS scores: (1) the English-speaking students in the first grade immersion class improved their Spanish and English from fall to spring, (2) the Spanish-speaking first grade students also improved their Spanish and English from fall to spring, (3) the second grade English speakers had "topped off" in their English and improved their Spanish, and (4) the second grade native Spanish speakers performed at nearly the highest levels in both Spanish and English.

B. Spanish Oral Language Skills

For the first time this year, the Student Oral Proficiency Rating (SOPR) was used by the teachers to assess Spanish speaking skills. The SOPR provides a measure of a student's ability to understand, speak, and be understood by others in the language he or she is learning. It is focused on oral communication ability considered apart from the ability to read or write in the language. Instead of rating the students during a specific testing time, the teachers use their observations over the year as the basis for rating a

student's level of ability. Each student is rated on five categories of oral language proficiency: comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. For each category, the student is rated in one of five levels, ranging from 1, indicating little or no ability, to 5, indicating a level of ability equivalent to that of a native speaker of the language.

FIRST GRADE Spanish Skills Out of the 19 first grade immersion students, four scored at level 1 (very limited), six scored at level 2 (limited oral), five scored at level 3 (functional), and 4 scored at level 4 (fluent).

SECOND GRADE Spanish Skills. Out of the 18 second grade immersion students, seven scored at level 2 (limited oral), eight scored at level 3 (functional), and three scored at level 4 (fluent).

These results indicate that the teachers observe a range of Spanish language skill levels among their students, confirming the LAS scores, and that students in the second year of the program show somewhat higher skill levels (more at levels 3 - 4, none at level 1) than the first year participants.

C. Conceptual Development

The Boehm Test of Basic Concepts is designed to measure children's mastery of concepts considered necessary for achievement in the first years of school. Boehm test results may be used both to identify children with deficiencies in this area and to identify individual concepts on which the children could profit from instruction. The test consists of 50 pictorial items arranged in approximate order of increasing difficulty. The examiner reads aloud a statement describing each set of pictures and instructs the children to mark the one that illustrates the concept being tested. In Arlington, the Boehm test is administered to first graders twice during the school year, in the fall and in

the spring. It is not given to second graders. Scores reported below represent the group averages for students who were present for both test sessions (16 students in the immersion class, 7 Spanish and 9 English/other language speakers).

FIRST GRADERS. On the English version of the Boehm in the fall, the immersion first grade averaged 44.56 items correct (Spanish speakers 41.43; English speakers 47.00). In the spring, the class averaged 46.81 items correct (Spanish speakers 44.86; English speakers 48.33), showing a gain of 2.25 points (Spanish speakers 3.43; English speakers 1.33). In the paired class of all English speakers, first graders averaged 45.70 items correct in the fall and 45.20 in the spring, a loss of 0.5 (for 10 students total). Thus, the immersion class as a whole showed greater improvement than the paired class on the English version of the Boehm. Similar gains were noted among last year's first grade program participants, who averaged a 3.2 point increase over the year.

On the Spanish version of the Boehm in the fall, the immersion first graders averaged 37.42 items correct (Spanish speakers 41.43; English speakers 34.33). In the spring, the class averaged 43.00 items correct (Spanish speakers 46.71; English speakers 40.11), showing a gain of 5.6 points (Spanish speakers 5.78; English speakers 5.28).

Based on the Boehm scores, we can observe that the immersion class students showed gains in their understanding of concepts from fall to spring in both English and Spanish, as did the program's first graders last year. Further, for the second year, immersion class students had gains equal to or higher than a comparable paired first grade class.

D. Social Studies, Science, Math, and Reading Achievement

FIRST GRADE Social Studies. Students in the first grade immersion class were given chapter tests in social studies throughout the year. Since the

social studies class is taught in Spanish, the tests were also in Spanish. The class average for the final four chapter tests was 89%. There was virtually no difference in scores when compared to the class average of the paired first grade class that was taught and tested in social studies in English. Their average was 88%.

FIRST GRADE Science. The first grade students also took science chapter tests (in Spanish) at the end of each chapter. The class average was 89%. There were no comparison group test scores available for science.

FIRST GRADE Math. The first grade students were administered the end of the year math test (in English) developed for the Holt Math series that they had been using. Out of the class of 19 children, seven scored above 90%, five scored between 80-90%, five scored between 70-80%, and two children scored below 70%.

SECOND GRADE Math. The second graders were also administered the end of the year Holt Test. Of the 18 children, 11 scored above 90%, five scored between 80-90%, and two scored between 70-80%.

FIRST GRADE English Reading. All first graders' English reading skills were assessed by their progress in the Ginn reading series. Out of the 19 immersion students, 13 had completed the first grade level, 3 had completed the first half of second grade level, and 3 had completed the second half of second grade level. In the comparison first grade group of 18 students, 7 had completed the first grade level, 7 had completed the first half of second grade level, and 4 had completed the second half of second grade level.

SECOND GRADE English Reading. Of the 18 second grade immersion students, 2 completed the second grade level while 16 completed the the first half of the third grade level.

A conclusion that can be made from the reading results is that the Spanish immersion instruction did not have a negative effect on students' English reading skills, since all students ended the year reading at or above grade level, and where comparisons were available, program students had kept pace with non-program counterparts.

E. Students' Perceptions

We interviewed some of the students to see what their views were on learning Spanish and English. We were amazed at how sophisticated their knowledge was about language learning and about the differences in the languages. They all enjoyed being able to communicate with others in Spanish, and some thought of it as a secret code that their parents and brothers and sisters couldn't understand.

One first grader, when asked if learning in Spanish was different from learning in English, replied "Yes, like horse is caballo in Spanish and horse in English." "Except," he continued, "some of the words used in Spanish are English words. Like if there isn't a Spanish word they use the English word. For example, take the word "NO". There is no word in Spanish for "NO", so they just use the English word (and put a Spanish accent on it)."

When we asked this same first grader which was easier, learning in Spanish or learning in English, he replied that Spanish was easier, because some of the words are shorter. "For example, the word YES in English has 3 letters while the word SI in Spanish has only two letters. Another example is the word pina in Spanish for pineapple." He went on to explain, "the English word pineapple is much longer because it has the apple attached to it."

The second graders interviewed were more nonchalant than the first graders about their Spanish skills and seemed to take it for granted that they could speak two languages. Two boys interviewed suggested that of course Spanish was

useful -- they can talk to people who only speak Spanish that way. Two native English-speaking girls gave the same reason for finding Spanish more interesting than English -- they could talk to those who only speak Spanish.

F. Attendance

The classroom teachers reported that student attendance in the first and second grade immersion classes was normal throughout the year and was comparable in attendance to other classes.

IV. Parent Attitudes

We interviewed a few first grade and a few second grade parents to find out their impressions of the program and their views were unanimous. Across the board, they spoke very favorably of the program.

One parent of a first grader said, "I am delighted with the program. Academically they are advanced compared to other first graders. The teachers have high expectations for the students and thus the students perform very well. The three teachers are fantastic. The program is excellent academically and socially. In the future, I hope they continue to have the same caliber instruction and teachers. The program went well beyond our expectations and I have high expectations."

Another first grade parent commented that at first her daughter didn't like the class but then she got used to it. "It's a wonderful program."

A second grade parent commented that the second year has been a breeze compared to last year, both for parents and students. This was a feeling that other second grade parents expressed as well. This same parent expressed a concern that other parents most likely have had. The concern is this: Will the second grade learn all the curriculum that they would learn in an all-English

class? This parent had the advantage of being able to actually go out and investigate firsthand what actually goes on in other second grade classes in Arlington. She is a substitute teacher, and by the end of this year had spent quite a lot of time in second grade classes around the county. What she found out was not a surprise. What they are learning in Key's second grade immersion class is the same curriculum and then some. Key second graders learn the regular curriculum and more. Not only do they learn about the planets and the solar system and the stars... they get an added dimension as well. They learn how to talk about it in another language.

Parents of both English speakers and Spanish speakers seem to have the same views. A mother of a second grader who speaks Spanish at home commented that the program has been very beneficial for him. "Now that he gets practice in Spanish at school, he speaks with more fluency and confidence at home."

V. Recommendations

Some of the reasons the program has been successful are:

1. Dedication of the teachers and staff. As everyone involved in this program knows, there is more work involved in an immersion program than in a regular one. The amount of time and effort devoted to the program has been admirable. The principal Dr. Wireman, teachers Floe Bingham, Marta Guzman, and Evelyn Fernandez, reading specialist Jan Spees, and the rest of the Key School staff deserve a lot of praise for developing a high quality program that serves both minority and majority language students.

2. The coordination between the two immersion classes and between the English and Spanish parts of the day has been improved from last year.

3. The opportunity for the teachers to participate in in-service training along with curriculum development for the past two summers has been a great

benefit to the program. The teachers attended workshops on immersion language education held in Montgomery County, Maryland, during the summer of 1987. In addition, there were several sessions during that summer devoted specifically to curriculum and materials development for the program. This has been particularly important for the Spanish language instructional component since existing curricula are not available in the county.

4. Most importantly, the parents have been actively participating in the program by volunteering in the classes and by actively promoting the program in the community. A group of parents have even begun a newsletter, Key Amigos, which contains news from the classes along with other announcements of interest and appears in both English and Spanish versions. The newsletter is sent to all parents in the program and also to other interested people in the community.

We have five major recommendations:

1. The program should be continued and expanded to involve grades 1 - 3. It is important to maintain the opportunities for students currently in the program to continue their work in two languages so as not to lose the advantage that has been gained.

2. A magnet program should be established at Key for partial immersion (English-Spanish) classes to attract a wide variety of students from all over Arlington. One concern that has been voiced by school staff is the potential lack of candidates for the program, particularly among the English-speaking group.(The demographics of the neighborhood Key draws on contributes to this problem.) At the same time, families in other parts of the county have requested immersion opportunities for their elementary school students. The magnet concept would increase the pool of students the program can draw on, ultimately strengthening and enriching it.

3. Summer in-service and curriculum development for new and current teachers should be continued. We have seen this year the value of time spent in in-service training and curriculum development. The teachers in the program profited from the opportunity to share ideas with teachers from other counties in similar programs and added to their knowledge base and repertoire of effective instructional approaches through the training they received. As importantly, they strengthened their connections in the network of language educators through both the seminars and their participation in professional conferences such as Advocates for Language Learning. The Arlington partial immersion program is now recognized as one of our nation's innovative educational programs, bringing benefits and challenges to the staff and giving them access to a rich array of resources to draw on.

4. The excellent coordination among staff dealing with students in the program should continue. Whenever possible, there should be planning time available for classroom and resource teachers to meet to discuss matters related to upcoming activities, articulation of instruction across grade levels, student progress, etc. In addition, all efforts should be made to continue to house program classes in the same area of the school to facilitate sharing of resources and to make the transition from one room to another as easy as possible for the students.

5. Spanish language materials for classroom use and the library should continue to be acquired. The collection of Spanish language resources was considerably expanded during this year and this process should be continued. At a minimum, materials suitable for older children and curriculum topics in the higher grade levels need to be added as the program expands. In addition, Spanish language resources of all kinds should be actively sought.

VI. Conclusion

Not only have we found a highly successful program this year, but we've also found one that has built on what it learned last year and one that has gained a lot of confidence. The program has had one more year of experience and it really shows. As the teachers commented, "The kinks have been worked out. We knew what to expect so we knew how to plan."

It was the overall consensus of the teachers, administrators, and staff that the program has run much smoother this year. The staff, parents, and students have had much more direction. In addition, the rest of the staff at the school has become more accepting of the program.

After two years of development, the partial immersion model has proven to be an effective model for Key School for educating minority and majority language students. The Spanish speaking children benefit because they get the opportunity to maintain their native language while learning English and the English speakers benefit because they get the opportunity to become fluent in Spanish. Not only that, but both groups benefit from children from different ethnic backgrounds, and in this case, they have at least 6 different native languages represented. And as one first grader said when asked which is more interesting, learning in Spanish or learning in English, "SPANISH, of course, because we already know English."